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ABSTRACT

This paper is addressed to the French teaching profession at large. The teacher's responsibilities toward his or her students, professional colleagues, administrators, professional associations, and the community are reviewed. Particular emphasis is placed on the obligations of the teacher trainer. Those responsible for educating new French teachers must be willing to study, discuss, and resolve the problems of teacher preparation with other teachers in their own departments and in other language departments, but the teacher trainer's influence must operate far beyond the walls of his own institution. He must collaborate with his colleagues in elementary and secondary schools and encourage his high school colleagues to send motivated students to appropriate university classes. As a member of one or more professional associations, the teacher trainer can share the results of his research and his innovative teaching ideas and can learn from other creative teachers. The teacher trainer and the student teacher are reminded that improved relations between educators and the communities they serve can lead to the development of new programs and to more opportunities for educational research. (Author/PMP)

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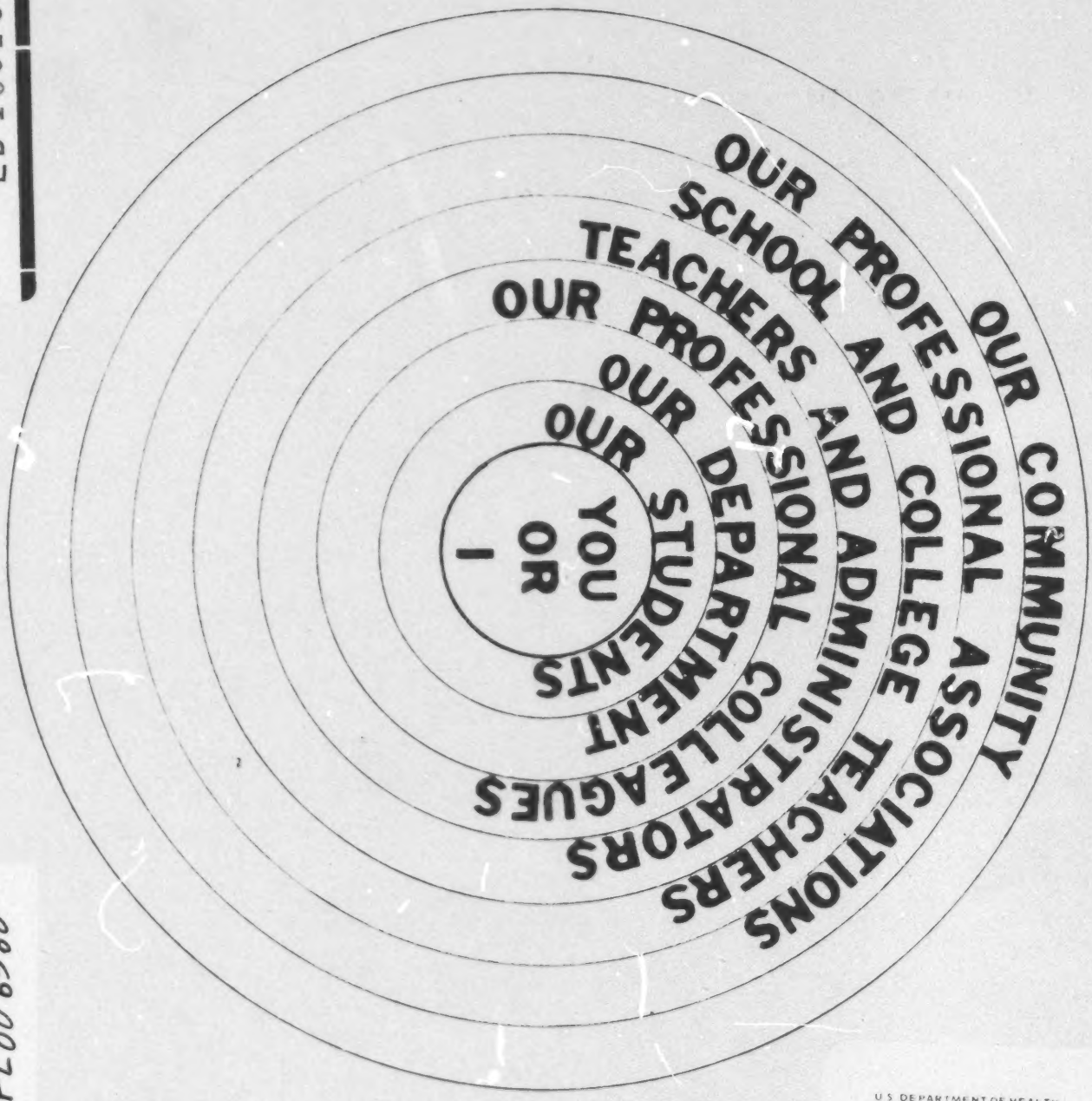

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MOBILIZING FOR IMPROVED FRENCH TEACHER EDUCATION

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Introduction

Who is responsible for preparing teachers of French? One can sound evasive and say: "The profession." The more widely one spreads the responsibility the less oppressive is the weight of obligation on oneself and the easier it is to "let George do it." Each one of us has his special interest; and if it happens not to be the preparation of teachers, we would prefer to leave this particular duty to those who are interested in it.

In this paper I shall maintain that it is indeed the profession that is responsible, but lest we be tempted to seek refuge in anonymity I shall also argue that there is not a single person among us, whatever his special interest may be, who is not individually responsible for improving the preparation of teachers of French or other foreign languages.

My colleagues on the panel criticized an earlier draft of this paper as being too general and skirting the subject. In various ways they expressed the wish that I would make specific suggestions, that I would let myself go, that I would speculate or even indulge in pipe dreams about future designs of teacher education programs. The present version therefore represents a cautious shift to the left. The suggestions I make for mobilizing the profession can be graphed as a set of concentric circles with each of us, you or me, individually located at the center of what looks like a spider web.

You and I

Whatever our individual specialization, you and I have in common the fact

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that we are teachers of some aspect of French--or another language. It follows that, consciously or not, we are teachers of teachers. For the future teachers in our classes we are examples of how, or how not, to teach. My colleague Laurel Briscoe likes to ask this question: "Since new teachers tend to ape the way they were taught, should we not make our teaching of them exemplary?" Teaching by example is at least as powerful as teaching by precept.

Even university linguistic or literary scholars who profess not to be interested in pedagogy are nevertheless concerned with the art of teaching and take pride in forming some of their best students in their image and occasionally in seeing a particularly brilliant disciple outstrip them in scholarly acumen or writing skill.

Such teaching, however inspired, and teacher training by example is, I claim, not enough. However impressive teachers may be either as linguistic scientists or literary artists, scholars, historians, critics, or lecturers, their colleagues in the department or in the profession have a right to at least their moral support and their votes for other professional activities, such as the preparation of teachers for elementary and secondary schools and for pedagogical as well as literary, linguistic, and cultural research. Prestigious university professors can, without hampering their own scholarly pursuits, support all legitimate activities of their departments, and their support is essential to a profession-wide effort to improve teacher preparation.

Responsibility sits more directly on those of us in the university who are not only models for future teachers but who train them. It is we who must, in cooperation with other teachers and with our students, take the initiative in reexamining our goals and objectives, the curriculum of the teacher-training program, and evaluation procedures.

Responsibility is no less heavy on those of us who in elementary or

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secondary school classrooms seek to share our joy in learning with younger and more susceptible students. We too must constantly question our effectiveness as stimulators of learning, consciously plant the seeds of interest in the possibility of future teaching, and explore the limits of our possible professional collaboration, all in the interest of preparing better teachers.

As you and I examine ourselves as teachers and especially as teacher trainers, and as we grow and change with the times, we will of course invoke our own highest standards and ideals. We shall also want to measure ourselves against the statement of Qualifications for Teachers of Modern Foreign Languages elaborated by a committee of the Foreign Language Program of the Modern Language Association and published in PMLA, Vol. LXXVII, No. 4, Part 2 (September 1962), p. 38. Every teacher or teacher trainer should in fact display prominently on his desk or on his office wall a copy of this qualifications statement.

Taking Our Students Into Partnership

Self-scrutiny leads us, on the next circle, to an examination of our association with others. Let us begin with our students, a neglected source of future teachers as well as a possible resource in teacher education, curriculum development, and research. Despite our recent preoccupation with "relevance" we have not in my opinion gone nearly far enough in cultivating student collaboration.

On any level of instruction, from preschool to graduate school, we should be ready to recruit future teachers, not of course by using even the slightest pressure but by making no secret of the pleasure we take in teaching and thus creating in our students a corresponding pleasure in learning.

As I see it, there are three essentials to success in this recruitment effort: (1) that we experience a real joy in teaching and, echoing the words of Jean Giono, que notre joie demeure in the face of adversity and adversaries; (2) that

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we take a real interest in our students as individual human beings whose infinite learning potential only awaits the touch of our imagination to be ignited; and (3) that we not withdraw our hand the minute a student leaves our classroom. Kindled imaginations need tending over the years.

Almost any class group of American students will contain some individuals with unusual language contacts or foreign experience. Such individuals can be tactfully used by a teacher as resources to stimulate interest. If perchance our class does not contain such students, we can invite former students or members of other classes to play this role.

In redesigning the curriculum how would it be if, instead of taking twenty to thirty students in lock-step through a course which we imagine will fill their needs, we were to take, say, five students of diverse backgrounds but eager to collaborate with an instructor in planning a course--or five courses--including the designing of an instrument to determine the student's cultural and linguistic background and his readiness for the course, a statement of aims and objectives, a detailed syllabus, indentification of materials and learning aids, and evaluation instruments? My fellow panelists will perhaps want to suggest other possible projects for student-teacher collaboration.

The Department of French - or Other Foreign Languages

Let us widen our view and consider our departmental colleagues, with whom we must be willing to study, discuss, and resolve the problem of teacher preparation--among many other problems. My own past experience as a university teacher, while not always encouraging, has been, I suspect, typical. You will recognize the dilemmas: Harried teaching assistants forced by the "system" to neglect their teaching apprenticeship in favor of a heavy load of graduate studies, overworked supervisors making one or two perfunctory visits to a teaching assistant's class, senior colleagues uninterested in lower-division courses and

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unwilling to teach them (I have even known of an interested senior colleague who was not permitted to teach a beginning course), and scholars whose exclusive interest in literary theory or theoretical linguistics makes them resent research in language learning, applied linguistics, culture, and civilization. I once wrote an essay on "The Faces of Language: Tool, Communication, Culture, Style" (The Graduate Journal, University of Texas, Vol. VI, No. 2, Fall 1964) in an effort to broaden our departmental perspective. Though I gave literature the place of honor in my essay, it was not enough to placate one "literature only" colleague, who read it with a polite "no comment."

Whether we find ourselves in a school, school system, college, or university, you and I are members of a team of teachers--and teacher trainers. This team may be stronger or weaker than the sum of its members. All depends on their individual and collective humanistic imagination. If a department is to become strong and to inspire among younger colleagues and students a desire to emulate their seniors, several conditions have to prevail: (1) Each teacher has to set for himself a high standard of professional achievement. (2) While pursuing with passion his own teaching and research, he needs to take a reasonable interest in the special aptitudes and interests of his colleagues and to support them in these interests so long as they contribute positively to the total program. (3) He should be willing to join with his colleagues in planning and implementing a total program on a level with the most imaginative thinking of the group. (4) This program should include, as an integral part, a teacher-education component.

Let us for a moment consider this teacher-education component, an admirable total design for which we already have in our Guidelines for Teacher-Education Programs in Modern Foreign Languages, jointly sponsored by the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification and the Modern

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Language Associations. (See PMLA, Vol. LXXXI, No. 2 (May, 1966), pp. A-2, A-3; and The Modern Language Journal, October 1966.) These Guidelines as well as the related Statement of Qualifications, are based on the concept of competency however acquired rather than on the accumulation of hour credits in designated courses. It is this concept which, incorporated in the pioneering Guidelines and Qualifications documents in 1966, is now being promoted by professional teachers associations. So perhaps this is an idea which was promulgated fifteen years too early by our profession but whose time may now have come, if only we can create a cordial working relationship with our colleagues in professional education.

Before moving out to the next circle let me try to answer a question that is often asked, namely, what did FL departments learn from the NDEA institutes which they helped to staff. The blunt answer is, Very little, or at least very little that they were willing to build into their regular teacher-education programs. As John S. Diekhoff writes in his excellent study NDEA and Modern Foreign Languages (1965), "The Institute Program has been essentially a remedial program, designed to correct deficiencies in the prior education of teachers already in service, to upgrade their skills, and to reorient them toward audio-lingual teaching." (p. 88) In the words of Mildred Boyer, writing about "Language Institutes and Their Future," (PMLA, Vol. LXXIX (Sept. 1964, Pt.2), p. 11), "The ultimate goal of the institute program is--or should be--to work itself out of a job by making this kind of training unnecessary. Such a goal is attractive for a number of reasons. If--or when--we reach it, it will mean that the language teaching profession of the United States has, after the help of the Federal Government during a time of crisis, made itself capable of accepting responsibility for its own future again. It will mean specifically that we have been able to build our best thinking about the training of modern-

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foreign-language teachers into our regular teacher-training programs in colleges and universities throughout the country." In a footnote (p. 90) Diekhoff writes, "An officer of the USOE suggests that the terminal date for institutes should be defined as five years after the colleges and universities demonstrate that they are doing the job in their regular programs. A professor of modern languages replies, 'Then they are permanent.'" And in an even more pessimistic vein Elton Hocking writes (Journal of Secondary Education, Oct. 1964, p. 248), "Evidently the massive effort to retrain teachers is a losing one: the colleges and universities are turning out ill-prepared teachers faster then the Institutes can retrain them." In a word the NDEA Institutes merely demonstrated how far we are from doing our job of teacher education.

Academic-Professional Partnership: Une Entente Cordiale

To college and university language departments is generally left the responsibility for preparing college and university teachers, but teachers of French and other language in schools are usually prepared in part by language departments and in part by departments, schools, or colleges of Education.

A competent teacher in any field knows what to teach and how to teach. It is idle to argue which is more important; both are essential. All too frequently in teacher-training programs the what and the how are separated. In the preparation of teachers of French, for example, a department or subdepartment of French has responsibility for certifying that a prospective teacher has adequate knowledge and skill in such aspects of French as language, linguistics, literature, culture, and civilization; and the department, school, or college of education usually has responsibility for certifying that the teacher candidate has adequate competence in planning, conducting, and evaluating instruction. But how often are the what and the how of teaching fused into one?

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It is my conviction that any effort to improve the quality of teacher preparation is foredoomed to fail until academic educators (i.e., teachers of academic subjects) and professional educators (i.e., teachers of Education) learn to collaborate--fully and freely.

The moment is favorable for the creation of an entente cordiale, between academic and professional educators. The present campaign by professional educators to promote competency- or performance-based teacher education provides us with a golden opportunity, which the AATG has been quickest to seize.

Let me emphasize the absolute necessity of our collaborating with our professional colleagues. If we do not, we may as well abandon any hope of improving the quality of FL teaching and learning in the schools; for it is the professional educators who have the closest ties with the schools, with the state departments of education, and with the many professional associations.

The best opportunity for our working together with our colleagues in Education is in my opinion the student teaching program. Here it is that the student teacher has an opportunity to demonstrate that he knows what to teach and how to teach. His performance should, I believe, be evaluated by a committee consisting of the principal of the school in which the student has done his apprenticeship, the cooperating teacher, a professional supervisor, and an academic supervisor, the latter two from the teacher-preparing institution. It seems to me of the greatest importance that these four educators observe the same performances, having been provided by the student teacher with lesson plans, that they then meet together to compare their criteria and evaluations, discuss discrepancies, and if possible reach a consensus.

Teacher-Administrator Relationship

Every teacher is part of an administrative hierarchy. The interaction between teachers and administrators is the subject of our next circle. The official whose policies

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and actions impinge on the classroom teacher are, in school, the department head, the guidance counselor, the principal, the subject coordinator, the director of instruction, the personnel director, the superintendent, etc., all of whom are responsible to the school board, which in turn is responsible to the community through its voters and taxpayers. In the university the classroom teacher is subject to the course chairman, division coordinator, departmental chairman, dean, provost, president, chancellor, all of whom are answerable to the trustees or regents, who in a public institution are subject to the legislature, the governor, and ultimately to the people who vote and pay taxes.

Most teachers, especially in schools, want as little as possible to do with administrators and in fact feel that they don't have the time to concern themselves with questions of academic governance, but in so deciding they are forfeiting their right to a voice in their professional status and in the formulation of educational policy. The maintenance of a proper balance between teaching and administration is delicate, and teacher-trainers can accept their full responsibility only by participating firmly with the administration in the determination of academic policy and procedure and by guiding their student teachers in the principles of proper teacher-administrator relationships. Individual teachers who exceptionally do take an active interest in such matters may run the risk of being labeled trouble-makers. The only self defense teachers have is in collective action, hence the existence of all sorts of teacher associations, which we shall take up after first considering the possible impact on teacher preparation to be accomplished by a partnership between school and college FL teachers.

A Collaboration of School and College FL Teachers

Secondary schools or elementary and secondary schools together can provide up to six levels of FL instruction: This instruction closely resembles that of

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our college undergraduate courses and indeed often excels it in interest and effectiveness. Would it not be mutually beneficial for French teachers in elementary schools, secondary schools, colleges, and universities to collaborate on the solution of their common problems? Here my own experience has been both good and bad.

On the debit side I have this to report. One year we FL teachers in the local chapter of the AATSP, both secondary and university, decided to meet together to discuss our common problems, but we made the mistake of not getting the permission of the high command. After two evening meetings our high-school colleagues were ordered by the school administration to have nothing further to do with those subversives in the university. Pondering the implications of these events, it seems to me indispensable that in preparing future teachers of French and other subjects we include instruction on how to achieve cooperation between teachers in schools and in universities.

On the credit side I can report the following: Some years ago one of our high-school teachers of Spanish, unable to arrange a fourth-level course for two of her good students, asked us whether we could accommodate them in one of our junior courses. We inquired of the dean and found to our happy surprise that there were no bureaucratic impediments. The students were made welcome without fee; and it was agreed that they would attend regularly, do all the work, participate in the class discussion, take the final examination, and receive a grade. Since the inception of this arrangement no high-school student has earned a grade of less than B. A record is kept of the grade; and if the student later enters the university, the grade becomes a part of his record. If a student chooses to go to another university, our chairman writes a letter setting forth

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the facts and recommending that, if it complies with that university's rules, the student receive credit for the course. This arrangement has a double psychological advantage: the high-schoolers take pleasure in out-performing the college students, and the latter tend to be shamed out of their lazy ways. And the acceleration of learning may very well hook a prospective teacher or two.

The Role of the AATF

The American Association of Teachers of French exists for the protection and professional advancement of teachers of French. Whereas an individual teacher of French may wish to add his weight to other good causes and join other organizations, it is the AATF which most directly serves teachers of French. How an individual may best serve his professional organization and use his influence to increase the power of the organization to serve individual teachers is a subject which should naturally be included in the program of the teacher candidate.

Given the importance of recruiting and preparing professional teachers of French, the AATF should perhaps consider expanding its efforts in this area to include not only the training of FLES teachers and of teachers for the secondary school and college but also of bilingual teachers, home visitors, and other out-of-school teachers. In my opinion the Association could do much to stimulate and sponsor pedagogical research and thus help provide the kind of experience which is badly needed by teacher candidates and new teachers.

An urgently needed task closely related to teacher education is the revision of the MLA FL Proficiency Tests for Teachers and Advanced Students. Perhaps the AATF could sponsor such an undertaking for the tests in French.

The Community as a Resource

Though one can imagine many more concentric circles, the subject of the

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last one I shall mention is the teacher's relationship with the community. No matter on what level he teaches, the teacher of French can and should use the community as a resource to augment the effect of his teaching and he should be alerted to this possibility in the course of his preparation for teaching.

Sometimes, to our collective chagrin, someone in the community takes the initiative, as in the case of the St. Lambert Experiment near Montreal and of CODOFIL (Council for the Development of French in Louisiana), both of which are instructive to us and might well serve in teacher-preparing programs as examples of what ca.. be accomplished by collaboration between the school and the community.

I am confident that you are all familiar with the home-school language-switch program in the St. Lambert School. Here in 1966 a group of mothers in an English-medium school proposed to Professor Wallace E. Lambert, a McGill University psychologist, that he undertake an experimental program in their school, using French as the exclusive medium of instruction in kindergarten and grade one, introducing English in a limited way from grade two, and gradually increasing the use of English grade by grade until both languages attain parity. To everyone's surprise, these English-speaking children compared favorably with French-speaking children in their learning in French and their control of French, and furthermore with little or no forma. instruction in English they also compared favorably with English-speaking children. (Wallace E. Lambert and G. Richard Tucker, Bilingual Education of Children, Rowley, Massachusetts: Newbury House, Publishers, Inc., 1972.)

In Louisiana a politician named James (Jimmy) Domengeaux undertook a public-relations campaign to maintain the French language and culture in this state. Largely as a result of this energetic and talented man's work, there are now five

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bilingual programs under way, with collaboration from Quebec, Maine, New Hampshire, and France. Especially worthy of mention is the contribution of French coopérants militaires, young men who are allowed by the French government to opt for this form of cultural service abroad instead of performing military service.

Another form of innovative education which teacher-trainers might well consider in their community relations is a variety of early childhood programs. Wilson Riles, the California State Superintendent of Public Instruction, has discovered the learning potential of preschool children and has been instrumental in promoting a voluntary program beginning at age four. ("Report of Task Force on Early Childhood Eduction," Sacramento, California, Nov. 26, 1971.) Such a program might well include the early learning of French or French-English bilingual education. A full realization of the language-learning potential of infants and preschool children suggests the desirability of training home visitors to advise mothers on the best ways of encouraging early learning by infants and young children. (See Roy W. Alford, "Appalachia Preschool Education Program: A Home-Oriented Approach," in Andersson and Mackey, Bilingualism in Early Childhood...Rowley, Massachusetts: Newbury House, Publishers, Inc., forthcoming.) The discovery that ages one and a half to three may be the most favorable for learning to read opens up the possibility of not only bilingualism but of biliteracy for the preschool child. (George L. Stevens and B. C. Orem, The Case for Early Reading, St. Louis, Missouri: Warren H. Green, Inc., 1968, Glenn J. Doman, How to Teach Your Baby to Read: The Gentle Revolution, New York: Random Hluse, 1964; Ragnhild Sõderbergh, Reading in Early Childhood: A Linguistic Study of a Swedish Preschool Child's Gradual Acquisition of Reading Ability, Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1971; Burton L. White and Jean Carew, et. al.,

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Experience and Environment: Major Influences on the Development of the Young Child, Vol, I, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973)

Conclusion

I have not attempted to outline another blueprint of teacher education. This has already been done and well done for the schools by André Paquette and others in the Guidelines for Teacher Education Programs in Modern Foreign Languages;by Mills F. Edgerton, Jr., "Training the Language Teacher--Rethinking and Reform," Foreign Language Annals, Vol. V (December 1971), pp. 197-205;and Douglas C. Sheppard, "Certificcation and Evaluation of Teachers," ADFL Bulletin, Vol. IX (December 1972), pp. 5-7;and for the colleges by Norman P. Sacks ("Training the New College Instructor" in Reports of Surveys and Studies in the Teaching of Modern Foreign Languages, New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1961, pp. 176-178);and by Archibald T. MacAllister, editor ("The Preparation of College Teachers of Modern Foreign Languages: A Conference Report," PMLA, Vol. LXXIX, No. 4 (May 1964), pp. 29-43).

My message comes closer to the hortatory appeal by Frederick D. Eddy in this J'accuse piece on "Staffing Foreign Language Departments in Colleges and Universities: A Declaration of Principle" (PEALS, Vol. XIV, No. 2, February 1974, pp. 12-17.) and his sequel on "Staffing FL Departments in Colleges and Universitites: A Tentative Draft of Criteria" (ADFL, Vol. VI, No. 1, September 1974, pp. 31-37.) though I try to focus more on individual than on organization responsibility. I have also tried to make my suggestions conform to William D. Schaefer's "A National Foreign Language Program for the 1970's," especially Point 7 in his Outline for Action, namely, "---a realistic and workable system must be developed to assure national standards in language achievement and quality control in the training of teachers as well as in teaching itself." (ADFL, Vol. VI, No. I, September 1974,) (pp. 7 - 17) I am concerned not so much with

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another blueprint, since those which have already been designed have not really been tried out, but rather with a new concept of our job and a new spirit for tackling it.

Addressing myself to the individual teacher, myself and my colleagues, whom I have imagined at the center of a series of widening circles, I have tried to measure individual competence--defined broadly as knowing what and how to teach--against one's ideal. The resulting self-image must of course be positive if one is to be successful in fighting fatigue and disillusionment, and conceive of one's job innovatively and with enthusiasm.

The greater one's self-confidence the greater will be one's influence for good on those around one. I have suggested using selected students as a resource by including them as collaborators in curriculum research. As others have done before me, I have mentioned the need to broaden the perspective of foreign-language departments which are too exclusively preoccupied with linguistic and literary theory. Especially have I pointed out the indispensable need for close and cordial collaboration between academic and professional educators, without which the what and how of teaching will never be successfully integrated. Essential also is a mutually respectful working relationship between teachers on the one hand and guidance counselors and administrators on the other.

The teacher trainer's influence can, and preferably should, operate far beyond the walls of his own institution. He can exert an influence for good by collaborating with his colleagues in elementary and secondary schools and by encouraging his high-school colleagues to send motivated students to appropriate classes in the university. As a member of one or more professional associations he can multiply the effect of his research and innovative teaching ideas and can learn from other creative teachers, and he can add his clout to that of others

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in the defense of professional values.

And finally, the trainer of teachers can and should tap the resources of the community he is serving, not only his immediate community but also the wider community of those with whom he shares a second language and culture. Bilingual education and early childhood learning potential provide unusual opportunities and resources. The use of French as a medium of instruction, not only in bilingual communities but even in English-speaking communities (e.g., St. Lambert), greatly exceeds the effectiveness of teaching French as a subject. The learning potential of the infant and the very young child, which is only now coming into full recognition, presents the French teacher and teacher trainer with extraordinary new opportunities and resources, which can serve in turn to revitalize the teaching of French on all levels.

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